

Oklahoma State University

Entry-Level Assessment

The purpose of entry-level assessment is to assist academic advisors in making placement decisions that will give students the best possible chance of academic success. Three methods are used to assess students' readiness for college level coursework: the ACT (consisting of four subtests in English, Reading, Mathematics, and Science Reasoning), the Entry-Level Placement Analysis (ELPA, developed by OSU), and the Computer Adaptive Placement and Support System (COMPASS) test published by ACT.

All enrolled new students (new freshmen and transfer students with fewer than 24 credit hours) receive a Student Assessment Report that summarizes:

- The student's academic summary (ACT scores, high school GPA, high school class rank)
- The student's ELPA results
- The curricular and performance deficiencies that require remediation, and
- The recommendations and requirements for course placement based on OSU's guidelines as approved by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.

Reports are produced by the Office of Institutional Research and Information Management and are distributed to students by the New Student Orientation Office. Reports are also included in each student's file and are available to advisors. The assessment process is implemented immediately prior to the spring and fall enrollment periods. Students identified with skill deficiencies through this process are required to complete remedial courses within the first 24 hours of college credit.

ACT subscores in Reading, English, Mathematics, and Science Reasoning of 19 or above (or SAT equivalent where available) automatically qualify students for college-level coursework (1000-level) in that subject area. The ACT subscore in Reading is also used to indicate readiness for introductory college courses that require extensive reading (Sociology, Political Science, Psychology, History, Economics, and Philosophy). The ELPA model is based on the success of past OSU freshmen with similar academic records and is updated regularly. ELPA produces a predicted grade index for each student that represents the grade the student is predicted to obtain in selected entry-level courses. Students identified as having curricular deficiencies from ACT score and the ELPA in a particular subject area may choose to take the ACT COMPASS placement test to qualify for college-level courses. The COMPASS tests are provided free of charge to students at the OSU Testing Center and can also be completed at NOC-Stillwater, NOC-Tonkawa, NOC-Enid, OSU-OKC, and OSU-Tulsa. COMPASS tests are available in Mathematics, Reading and English. Qualification for 1000-level science courses is obtained through receipt of passing scores on both the Reading and Mathematics subject tests.

In 2008-2009, a total of 3,470 enrolled students with fewer than 24 credit hours were assessed using the entry-level assessment process. There were 235 (6.8% of the total number enrolled) students who were identified as having performance deficiencies and were required to take at



least one remedial course – 39 (1.1%) in English, 180 (5.2%) in math, 56 (1.6%) in Science, and 30 (0.9%) in Reading.

Two additional studies of entry-level students were performed in 2008-2009: the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The NSSE, while not a traditional entry-level measure, does ask first-year students questions about their level of engagement in educationally enriching activities. Detailed information about these two surveys can be located on the UAT website:

<http://uat.okstate.edu/assessment/surveys/index.html>

All five of OSU's NSSE benchmarks for first-year students were significantly higher than they were in 2005 and two of the benchmarks (Student-Faculty Interaction and Supportive Campus Environment) were significantly higher than the average score at participating doctoral / research institutions.

General Education Assessment

Information about OSU's general education learner goals is available on the OSU website (<http://osu.okstate.edu/acadaffr/aa/gened-CriteriaGoals.htm>). Three approaches are used to evaluate the general education program: Institutional Portfolios, Review of General Education Course Database, and college-, department-, and program-level approaches.

Institutional portfolios provide direct evidence of student achievement of the overall goals of general education. Institutional portfolios have been developed in five areas that represent the overall goals of the general education program: written communication, critical thinking, math problem solving, science problem solving, and diversity. Since 2001 OSU has collected samples of student work that represent student achievement of the general education goals from courses across campus. These student work samples are then assessed by a panel of faculty members using rubrics. The results from this process provide direct evidence of student achievement of the general education goals. To make the best use of limited resources institutional portfolios are not collected in every area every year. Four areas were assessed in 2009: written communication, critical thinking, science problem solving, and diversity. In 2008-2009 460 samples of student work were collected and evaluated by a panel of faculty members using rubrics developed and approved by OSU faculty members. The percent of samples scored as a '3' or higher (on a 5-point scale) was 77% for critical thinking, 60% for written communication, 52% for science problem solving, and 59% for diversity.

The General Education Advisory Council (GEAC) periodically evaluates every general education course to ensure alignment with the goals of the general education program. As part of this certification process instructors identify which general education goals are associated with the course, describe the course activities that provide students the opportunity to achieve the goals, and explain how student achievement of the goals is assessed within the course. Each course with a general education designation is reviewed every three years.



Many colleges, departments, and programs include elements from the general education goals in their own assessment efforts. These assessment activities are included in the program outcomes assessment section.

In response to these findings, the institution has decided to continue to fund the *Provost's Faculty Development Initiative: Focus on General Education* in 2009-2010. In addition, a group of faculty and staff members is being formed to further study the critical thinking findings and to identify possible approaches the institution may use to improve the results. OSU is also engaged in a number of initiatives to improve students' diversity scores (<http://diversity.okstate.edu/>). Assessment data are also used to monitor recent changes to the general education program.

All results will be shared broadly with faculty members and relevant councils and committees at OSU and publicly on the OSU general education assessment website (http://uat.okstate.edu/assessment/assessment_at_osu/gened/index.html). Additional discussions about how to respond to results and take steps to improve will be held during the sharing of results.

Program Outcomes Assessment

All OSU degree programs are required to have an outcomes assessment plan and to provide an annual report on assessment activity. Detailed reports for each program can be obtained from the program outcomes assessment website:

http://uat.okstate.edu/assessment/annual_reports/annual_report_instructions.html

OSU, through the process for awarding more than \$100,000 in assessment funds for program outcomes assessment each year and through feedback provided to programs by the College Assessment Coordinators and the Director of Assessment and Testing, has been taking steps to move programs toward direct measures of student learning and toward assessment processes with a high likelihood of resulting in program improvement. Program outcomes assessment is also a critical component of each program's 5-year Academic Program Review.

Undergraduate and graduate programs reported 439 assessment methods implemented for program outcomes assessment. The most commonly reported assessment methods were:

- Faculty or external review of student projects (72 reports, 16% of the total)
- Standardized, licensure, certification, or local exams (60 reports, 14% of the total)
- Faculty or external review of student papers (58 reports, 13% of the total)
- Faculty or external review of oral presentations (38 reports, 9% of the total)

Other methods used included portfolios, comprehensive or qualifying exams, review of theses, dissertations, and creative components, surveys of alumni and employers, internship evaluation, and other performance assessments.

Undergraduate and graduate programs reported 348 uses of program outcomes assessment data (uses may represent more than one assessment method). The most common use of program



outcomes assessment data was to monitor and ensure student achievement of the learning outcome. Other common uses include:

- Improvements to the assessment process (76 uses, 22% of the total)
- Changes to courses (53 uses, 15% of the total)
- Discussion and consideration of improvements (53 uses, 15% of the total)
- Changes to the curriculum (35 uses, 10% of the total)
- Creation of new courses (10 uses, 3% of the total)
- Various other uses including changes to advising, hiring decisions, communication with students, facilities and labs, and examination of program resources (38 uses, 10% of the total)

The large number of uses of program outcomes assessment demonstrates that it is an integral and essential element of OSU's commitment to improving student learning.

Student Satisfaction

Surveys of alumni are conducted every year – surveys of alumni from undergraduate programs are conducted in even numbered years and surveys of alumni from graduate programs are conducted in odd numbered years. Current graduate students' satisfaction is surveyed in even numbered years (last completed in spring, 2008).

The 2009 Survey of Alumni of Graduate Programs

(<http://uat.okstate.edu/assessment/surveys/alumni/2009/index.html>) targeted individuals who graduated from a graduate degree program in 2003 and 2007. Alumni are contacted through the mail, through email (when a current email address is available), and over the phone. 2,176 alumni were contacted for participation and 989 surveys were completed for a response rate of 45%. Key findings from the 2009 Survey of Alumni of Graduate Programs:

- 88% of respondents on the 2009 Survey of Alumni of Graduate Programs reported they were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their overall educational experience at OSU. Only 4% of respondents were “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” with their overall educational experience at OSU.
- 55% of the respondents were residents of Oklahoma.
- 92% of respondents reported current employment. Educational institutions (37%) were the largest employer of graduates.
- The most frequently reported salary was in the range of \$75,000-\$99,000 per year.
- 93% of respondents found their OSU education had prepared them “very well” or “adequately” for their current position.
- Of the alumni who pursued additional education, 53% of them enrolled at OSU. 89% of respondents found their OSU education had prepared them “very well” or “adequately” for their continued education.

Each graduate program was asked to submit a set of questions in addition to those described above. The program-specific questions covered many topics, depending on the interest area of each program, including advising, student learning outcomes, teaching skills, time-to-degree, satisfaction with specific courses or program components, strengths and weaknesses of the program, suggested curricular changes, and other satisfaction topics. Results of the program-



specific questions were summarized and shared with programs. It is not possible to summarize the results of the program-specific questions here because the questions were different for each program.

OSU also administered the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) in 2009 (<http://uat.okstate.edu/assessment/surveys/student/nsse/2009/index.html>). 6,466 OSU first-year and senior students were contacted for participation in the 2009 NSSE. A total of 1,414 first-year or senior students completed the NSSE for a response rate of 22%. Key findings from the 2009 administration of the NSSE:

- 94% of first-year respondents and 86% of senior respondents rated their entire educational experience at OSU as “good” or “excellent.”
- 90% of first-year respondents and 86% of senior respondents would “probably” or “definitely” attend OSU again if they could start over – a result that was significantly higher than the average score for participating doctoral / research extensive universities.
- First-year and senior results were significantly higher than the average score at 13 selected peer institutions and participating doctoral / research institutions in relationships with administrative personnel and offices and the quality of academic advising.
- All of OSU’s 2009 first-year benchmarks were significantly higher than they were in 2005.
- OSU’s 2009 senior benchmark for Enriching Educational Experiences was significantly higher than it was in 2005.

The NSSE results were shared with faculty and staff members across campus and were shared publicly on the UAT website and as part of *USA Today*’s NSSE report. A workshop open to campus on the results was held in November. College-level results will be shared with representatives from each college to discuss possible improvement strategies.

Graduate Student Assessment

The primary method for assessing graduate students’ achievement of learning outcomes is program outcomes assessment and is described in that section of this executive summary. Full details on each program’s analysis of student learning and findings are available online: http://uat.okstate.edu/assessment/annual_reports/annual_report_instructions.html

Summary

OSU is highly committed to improving student learning through entry-level assessment, general education assessment, program outcomes assessment, and student satisfaction assessment. Assessment activity in 2008-2009 resulted in numerous improvements to courses, programs, departments, and colleges and supported OSU’s vision for advancing the quality of life in Oklahoma by fulfilling the instructional, research, and outreach obligations of a first-class, land-grant educational system.

